

PEPPER (W<sup>m</sup>)

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THE ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE ASSO-  
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BY WILLIAM PEPPER, M.D., LL.D.,  
*Provost, and Professor of the Theory and Practice of Medicine,  
University of Pennsylvania.*

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## THE ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN PHYSICIANS.<sup>1</sup>

BY WILLIAM PEPPER, M.D., LL.D.,  
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To those who share the feelings of close relationship which the earnest and friendly meetings of our Association have fostered among us, it will not seem strange that I pause, before proceeding to our scientific work, to speak of our fellow-members who have been taken from us during the past year.

Hosmer Allen Johnson, a founder, trustee and professor of the Chicago Medical College, and one of our original members, died February 26, 1891, at the age of 68 years. In the truest sense of the words he was an ornament to our profession. Dignity and elevation of character, blended with rare charm of presence, conferred additional distinction upon his high scientific and literary attainments. His memory will be cherished not only in the city of his adoption, but by all who had the privilege of his friendship.

James Kingsley Thacher, Professor of Physiology in the Medical Department of Yale University, and an original member of our Association, died on April 20, 1891, at the age of 44 years. Descended from a line of ancestors eminent for vigor and originality of intellect, Dr. Thacher early displayed rare powers as an investigator and thinker. It was not until the age of 33, and after he had won international distinction by his researches in comparative anatomy and physiology, that he began the practice of medicine. He rapidly attained the front rank of the profession, and during the remaining years of his life his frequent contributions to medical literature were of exceptional value, as embodying the work of a highly-trained scientist dealing with problems of practical medicine. It is difficult to overestimate the loss sustained in the early death of one who so well illustrated the highest type of the physician—the student of Nature as revealed in the functions and disorders of the human body.

Richard Lea MacDonnell, Professor of Clinical Medicine in McGill University, had been a member of our Association but a short time when his death occurred on July 31, 1891, at the sadly early age of 35 years. He possessed gifts and ability of high order as clinician, as writer, and as teacher. He had already accomplished much valuable work, and was so well equipped in purpose, powers and position, that a brilliant career was confidently expected. The Association has lost in him one of its most promising members.

Out of our short list of honorary members, Fordyce Barker and Joseph Leidy have gone. Dr. Barker died May 30, 1891, at the age of 73. His long life seemed all too short for the countless acts of courtesy and charity which he found place for in a career rich in professional and social success. The delight-

<sup>1</sup> Delivered at the sixth annual session of the Association of American Physicians, Washington, D. C., Sept. 22, 1891.





ful charm of the man almost threw into shade the remarkable gifts of the physician. His tact and urbanity were perfect, and his hospitality boundless, so that he was the paragon of hosts. The affectionate solicitude with which he lavished on his patients, rich and poor alike, the resources of his skill, made him one of the most successful and beloved of physicians. His large-hearted sympathy and benevolence made him eager in the organization and service of all movements for the relief of suffering and the elevation of his fellows. The rich treasures of his experience and his strict scientific integrity made his publications valued in all parts of the world. These many honorable distinctions made it eminently proper he should be placed on the list of our honorary members, and in his death we all have to lament the loss of a dear friend and a cherished colleague.

In the death of Joseph Leidy, which occurred on April 30, 1891, at the age of 68 years, the medical profession in America lost its most loved and honored member, and American science its most illustrious representative. It makes a difference to the world when such a man passes away. At his birth Nature gave him her accolade, and all his life long he was loyal to the holy quest of truth, which is the vow imposed on those whom she invests as her chosen knights. Who can say how much of the marvellous and inexhaustible knowledge of Nature this great man possessed came from the singleness of his life and the purity of his heart? Who can say how many of the miserable shortcomings we all exhibit, even in our best work, spring from the selfishness and the prejudice we allow to mix with it? Leidy never had a theory to support or a purpose to serve. The all-sufficing motive of his life was to learn the truth of nature and to help others to learn it also. To the last he kept the humility and the simplicity of a little child. No delight could surpass what he felt when new facts were disclosed to him, unless it were that with which he would share with others all he knew. He made great discoveries in various fields of scientific research, but he never seemed to feel any credit was due to him. It merely was that he had chanced first to see that particular fact. It was no achievement of his. Nature had but given him one more little glimpse of her truth. He looked at all natural things with the same fresh, clear-eyed directness. It did not matter by whom, or under what names, or in what surroundings, an object was brought before him; he simply saw the thing itself. In this way he detected blunders innumerable, and became a general referee to whom all sorts of supposed remarkable discoveries were submitted. The certainty with which he could detect the real nature of the object and the simple, genial way in which he would explain it made irritation impossible. All knew he would treat an inaccurate observation of his own in the same kindly but unsparing fashion.

If only the facts were discovered, it mattered not to him by whom the discovery was made; and windy battles over claims of priority or selfish struggles to pre-empt fields of investigation were alike impossible to him. More than once he turned aside from lines of research in which he was the pioneer, and where brilliant discoveries were in sight, as soon as he found there were others who longed to win distinction in the same field. I could never see that he enjoyed their triumphs any less than if he himself had won them.



Incapable himself of jealousy or untruth or disloyalty, he seemed also incapable of thinking evil of others. In all matters of business he would have been readily imposed upon, and his confidence was freely bestowed on all who sought it. But in the estimation of the scientific value of a man's work he was in many lines of research the very highest and the most candid authority.

Of course he had no enemies. All were united in respect and affection for him. But only those who lived in close and frequent intercourse with him can tell what elevating and humanizing influences this man of science diffused around him. It helped you to be truthful, simple and liberal merely to meet him and talk with him. I think few men have been more loved by men than he was; and I know not if there be a higher tribute than these to a man's nature. I shall not attempt to tell what Leidy achieved in many branches of science. The mere fact that his scientific contributions numbered fully eight hundred, conveys little idea of the range of subjects they covered; the epoch-making character many of them possessed, or the enormous amount of patient labor bestowed on the thousands of exquisite illustrations they contained. I cannot tell you what he was to his colleagues or to his students in the University of Pennsylvania, where for thirty-eight years he filled the Chair of Anatomy. I feel sure that every colleague in the faculty and every student in the college during that long time was influenced for good by contact with this pure and lovable man. For to Leidy the ever-growing fulness of knowledge brought increasing humility and wonder at the boundless mystery of nature. And as the close of a profound study of one after another field of natural history, added to his sense of inadequacy of our powers to cope with the problems of creation and life, his feeling of the necessity of a God of Nature strengthened and deepened. Only a few days before his death, as I stood by his bedside, he chanced to notice the flowered pattern of the carpet on the chamber-floor and said: "How can they work flowers in a carpet? We love flowers! No one would tread on flowers!" And with his heart full of such gentle thoughts he lapsed into peaceful unconsciousness—like a tired child falling asleep in the bosom of the nature he had loved so long and so well.

It would seem to me an abuse of a rare privilege were I to add to what I have said more than a few but cordial words of welcome. In thanking my colleagues, the members of the Association of American Physicians, for the honor conferred upon me when called to preside over this meeting, I may couple with these thanks a no less hearty congratulation that the recurrence of our Congress year finds our Association not only instinct with life, and in close touch with what is best and most progressive in medical work, but establishes the fact that participation in the Congress certainly does not detract from the interest and importance of our own meeting.

No less may I join with our warm and brotherly greeting to the distinguished guests who have accepted our invitation and honor us with their presence, the gratifying claim that the many charms of a visit to this country, and the great pleasure to be given and received in the kindly social intercourse of this week, have not been more potent attractions than the prospect of sharing in the rich programme of scientific work arranged for this Association and for the Congress.



So far at least as medical men are concerned, one need no longer repeat the assurance that when they cross the ocean they change not their feelings but only their horizon. There exists no barrier to our intercourse. The complete solidarity of our science o'ertops all divisions of race or place. The progress and the interpenetration of knowledge first outgrew personal authority, and have now outgrown the limits of national schools of science.

The existence of this society of clinicians and pathologists is by no means a protest against specialism in medical science. Its presence here in this Congress is typical of the present attitude of scientific medicine to specialism. Just as this great meeting would be crippled without the participation of many special societies, so would our own membership be sadly incomplete did it not include many eminent specialists. General medicine and general surgery to-day are federations of specialties; and the general clinician, even of the broadest gauge, in dealing with obscure and complicated cases, acts but as the leading partner in a medical firm.

This is the natural and desirable development of our professional relations. The courts where the issues of our causes are decided are open constantly, and have unlimited jurisdiction. The microscope, the ophthalmoscope, the hæmometer, the tests of organic chemistry, are witnesses whose presence is always available, and whose testimony as to matters of fact is unimpeachable. No cumbrous accumulation of papers and elaborate machinery of procedure hamper our legislation. In the privacy of two or three consulting-rooms are determined with all reasonable certainty and celerity the issue of causes, vastly more vital to the parties interested, and scarcely less so to the community at large, than those which fill columns in the daily press and block the slow wheels of litigation for years. Remedial measures are agreed upon and carried into effect which require such masterful decision, fertility of resource and energy of action as stamp the great leaders in all the hard-fought battles of the world.

It is a supreme glory of our service that it is restricted to no nation, no dynasty, no place, no class. The monarch of the mightiest empire and the poorest patient in the hospital ward command and receive the same efforts in their behalf.

It is by the combination of the highest specialism, wrought by mutual trust and trained co-operation into absolute unity, that the great triumphs of medicine and surgery are now achieved. The evident truth of this is the basis of the work of our Association. The broadening field, the increasing precision of our work; the vast scope of the questions of heredity, of climatic and racial influence, of hygiene and dietetics, of mental and moral regimen—of all that is included in preventive medicine, the great battlefield of the future, and which must be used as far as understood in the struggles of the remedial medicine of to-day—call for a co-operation—not local, but national and international—which shall bring into closer touch, better mutual knowledge and deeper mutual trust, all earnest workers in scientific medicine.

It is, then, with the happy assurance that our work here is in line with the great onward movement of the day, that I announce the opening of the sixth annual session of the Association of American Physicians.



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